



COMMUNITY PLAYERS

CURTAIN CALLS

Vol. 5.4

November, 2009

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The Pajama Game Plays at Community Players

by John Lieder

The fall musical of the 2009-10 season is *The Pajama Game* with music & lyrics by Richard Adler and Jerry Ross and book by George Abbott and Richard Bissell. As with all the shows this season, this marks the first time that this show has been performed at Community Players. However, this is no obscure musical. It features such popular songs as “Hey There”, “Hernando’s Hideaway” and “Steam Heat.” The original Broadway production won the 1955 Tony award for best musical and the 2006 revival starring Harry Connick Jr. won best revival of a musical.

Set mainly in the Sleep Tite Pajama Factory in Cedar Rapids, Iowa, circa 1950, the story deals with love, romance, jealousy and some good old fashioned skirt-chasing amidst labor turmoil. Our main love interests are superintendent Sid Sorokin (played by Normal West student **Sean Stevens**) and head of the grievance committee Babe Williams (played by ISU student **Kelsey Burd**). Their relationship is threatened by being on

opposite sides in the workers’ battle for a 7½ cents raise.

Secondary love interests are “time study man” Vernon Hines (**Kevin Wickert**) and secretary Gladys Hotchkiss (**Wendy Clarenson**).

The antagonist, at least from the workers’ perspective, is factory owner Myron Hasler, played by **Dave Lemmon**.

Playing the president of the union and inveterate skirt-chaser, Prez, is yours truly, **John Lieder**. (So what’s the opposite of “type casting”?) **Sarah Stone Innerst** plays Mabel, Sid’s secretary and the jealousy-prone Hines’ relationship advisor. **Aimee Kerber** plays factory worker



Mae, one of Prez’s chases. **Ryan Wiechmann** and **Jason Strunk** are the two cutting room boys who perform “Steam Heat” with Gladys. Rounding out the cast are **Allison Toth**, **Christy Berka**, **Rebecca Peacock**, **Jenny Koth**, **Amanda Conley**, **Kelly Peiffer**, **Grace Ellen Losey**, **Joe Culpepper**, **Brett Cottone**, **Allen Popowski**, **Jay Hartzler**, and **Kyle Holliday**.

The set is adapted from the design **Bruce Parrish** developed for the 1989 Miller Park production. Working with Bruce to further adapt and build the set are **Alan Wilson** and **Gary Strunk**. **Dave Fuller** is doing the main paint design.



John Lieder and Kelsey Burd lead the Sleep Tite workers in a celebration of “Seven and a Half Cents”.

... continued on page 2.

COMMUNITY PLAYERS
Calendar

Nov. – Dec. 2009

Board Meetings

Nov. 10, 6:00 p.m.
Dec. 8, 6:00 p.m.
Community Players Theatre

Pajama Game

Preview: Oct. 29
Shows: Oct. 30-Nov. 1, 5-8, and
12-15

Dearly Departed

Auditions: Nov. 9-10
Preview: Jan. 7, 2010
Shows: Jan. 8-10, 14-17, 21-23

Oleanna

Shows: Nov. 19-21

Tickets can be ordered online at
www.communityplayers.org.
Click on "Online Ticket Sales."



Community Players

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Community_Players_Theatre](http://my.pantagraph.com/businesses/Community_Players_Theatre)

Newsletter Committee

Jim Kalmbach
Barb Lemmon
John Lieder
Bob McLaughlin
Sally Pary

We are always looking for
writers, artists, designers and
story ideas. Send suggestions to
kalmbach@ilstu.edu

Curtain Calls is published six
times a year for the voting mem-
bers of Community Players.

For information about joining us,
please contact our membership
chair, Barb Lemmon at
barb.lemmon@comcast.net.

Back issues of *Curtain Calls*
are available on the Commu-
nity Players web site. Click on
"Newsletter Archive."

Dearly Departed is drop-dead funny!

In the Baptist backwoods of the Bible belt, the beleaguered Turpin family proves that livin' and dyin' in the South are seldom tidy and always hilarious! Despite their best efforts to pull themselves together for their father's funeral, the Turpins' other problems keep overshadowing the solemn occasion. An eccentric cast of characters and enjoyable storyline ensure that *Dearly Departed* will become an audience favorite.



Auditions for *Dearly Departed*, by David Bottrell and Jessie Jones, will be held on Monday, November 9th and Tuesday, November 10th at 7:00 p.m. at Community Players Theatre. *Dearly Departed* will have roles for up to seven adult men and eight adult women (ages 18+). Auditioners will be asked to fill out an audition form and read from the script. Attendance on both audition nights is encouraged, but is not mandatory. There are several roles for seniors, age 55+.

Director Brian Artman is looking for energetic, character actors and actresses who are willing to commit to a very fun, somewhat farcical production. Performances will be January 8-10, 14-17, 21-23, 2010 with a preview performance scheduled for January 7, 2010.

If you are unable to attend either of the scheduled nights of auditions and need to arrange for a private audition, or if you would like more information about the show, please contact Brian Artman, brian.artman.JEHL@statefarm.com, or visit the Community Players website: http://www.communityplayers.org/shows_departed.html.



... *The Pajama Game* preview continued from page 1

The set features two revolves that help transport the audience from the factory to Babe's apartment to the local picnic grounds. Sid's office is set on the stage left apron. The orchestra will be in the stage right "pit."

Deb Smith is directing this production and her hubby **Gary Strunk** is producing (in addition to his work on the set). In Players' fine all-in-the-family tradition, Gary's son Jason is Assistant Director. Musical direction is under the baton of ISU student **Ben Nadel**. **Whitney Spencer** is choreographer, **Penny Wilson** is costumer, **Mark Wright** is doing the lighting design and **Rich Plotkin** is doing sound. Properties are under the control

of the mighty triumvirate of **Theresa Kerber**, **Carol Plotkin** and **Dorothy Mundy**. **Judy Stroh** is stage manager and **Jean Lieder** is House Manager. **Ellen Hagen** and **Angie Schwab** are sharing duties as rehearsal accompanists.

The Pay-What-You-Can Preview performance is Thursday, October 29. Regular performances are October 30 – November 1, November 5-8 and 12-15. As usual, evening performances begin at 7:30 and Sunday matinees begin at 2:30. Appropriately, *The Pajama Game* is being sponsored by "Sleep Center of Central Illinois."

The Musicians of the Theatre

Sally Sparks Hoffmann

A unique aspect of Community Players theatre are the musicians for our orchestras. Theatre musicians are cut from a different cloth than your typical classically trained or jazz musician. Sure, they love to play their instruments, but what brings them back to play or conduct here show after show?

Perhaps it is the lure of live theatre: each show is different, each performance unique. Perhaps it is a fantastic score that they have always wanted to play. Perhaps they just love playing in key-signatures with seven flats or sharps or being counted on to “cover” when cast members skip a whole passage or loses their place. They may find themselves joined by a cast member or two who had to crawl through the pit to make an exit, have an unexpected prop land on their head, or have dry-ice rolling into the pit.

The orchestra sometimes find themselves set up in some interesting places and in costume along with the cast. Who can forget *Sweeney Todd* when the orchestra set up in the center next to the barber shop and the “meat-pies” or *West Side Story* where the orchestra was up on the fire-escape? They certainly enjoyed being seated in a marsh for *Honk!*, donning in duck-hunting costumes.

The *Nonsense* orchestra was up on stage in nun habits including one “expecting” nun! *Barnum* had a costumed “circus” orchestra under the Big Top complete with a conductor in red-sequined tails. *1940's Radio Hour* had an orchestra that was part of the cast complete with lines and acting.



The orchestra from *Barnum* with Hans Damkoehler: Scott Reynolds, Julie Peterson, Barb Lemmon, Jacob Passini, Denise Hodges, Sally Sparks Hoffmann, Kim Snyder, Tim Delaney, Matthew Dahm, Dave Zehr, Jim Parr, Al Hedstrom.

Our core of musicians are terrific, and many of them have been with the theatre for years. You may see some of them “double” or play multiple instruments for our shows. With minimal rehearsals, maybe one or two before the “techs” start, they must be fine sight-readers. Many are professional musicians or music teachers or have other careers in the community. They are much appreciated by the staff and cast of shows and by the Community Players’ Board of Governors.

If you would like to play in our orchestras or are interested in music directing or piano accompanying, we would love to hear from you! You can contact us at community.players@verison.net. Applications for staff positions for the 2010-11 season—including musical directors and accompanists—will be available in November.

Community Players Announces 2010-2011 Season

“Silver Screens and Small Stages” is the theme for 88th season. The Play Reading committee has selected shows inspired by the movies, either movies that became plays or plays that became movies.

The season will start in September with *State Fair*, a Rodgers and Hammerstein musical made into films in 1945 and 1962, and produced for the first time on Broadway in 1996. The show is a loving tribute to the state fair tradition, following the Frake family’s adventures at the Iowa State Fair in 1946. While the parents are hoping to win a few blue ribbons, their children are more interested in finding romance on the midway.

In time for Halloween we have the inspiration for many a movie, the play version of *Dracula*. An enormously successful revival of this classic opened on Broadway in 1977, starring Frank Langella, fifty years after the original production. This is one of the great thrillers of all time.

Our winter comedy in late January is *John Loves Mary*, a farce by Norman Krasna about a World War II soldier who marries his buddy’s British girlfriend to bring her to the United States. Turns out his buddy married someone else and John’s fiancée is anxious to get married. Many complications ensue in this stage hit that was filmed in 1949 with Ronald Reagan, and Patricia Neal.

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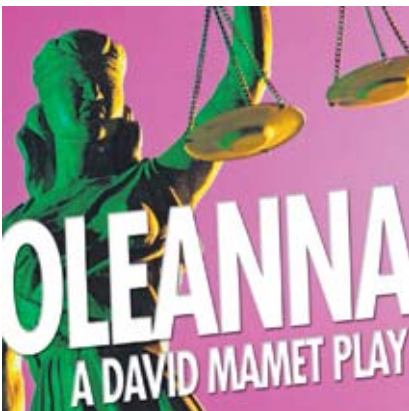
Mamet's *Oleanna* Plays for One Weekend

Bob McLaughlin

David Mamet's two-character play *Oleanna* will be the third annual Community Players Lab Show. Players introduced the Lab Show in 2007 as a way of offering plays that don't fit our usual main-stage profile, plays that are a bit smaller, a bit darker, or a bit edgier. These plays offer different kinds of challenges to our actors and designers, giving them the chance to grow as artists, and different kinds of challenges to our audiences, hopefully expanding their horizons and drawing theatergoers who may not have been to Robinhood Lane before.

Oleanna premiered in 1992, opening in New York in the wake of the Clarence Thomas Supreme Court nomination hearings, with their real-life drama of Anita Hill's accusations of sexual harassment. It begins with John, a smugly iconoclastic university professor, about to be tenured and, with his wife, about to buy a house, meeting in his office with Carol, a student who just doesn't get the course material and is desperate to know how to pass. Their conversation leads to accusations of sexual harassment, with John's security threatened and Carol's insecurity turned to empowerment. On one level the play is about political correctness. On another, it's about the way power operates in seemingly straightforward personal relationships. On still another, it's about what constitutes the truth: Can we really know whose version of what happened is the true one—John's

or Carol's—and can we be sure of what we saw with our own eyes?



Players' production augments something of a Mamet-fest this autumn. In New York, two new one-act plays are playing Off-Broadway, his new, sure to be controversial play *Race* is getting ready to open on Broadway, and a Broadway revival of *Oleanna*, starring Bill Pullman and Julia Stiles, has just opened at the Golden Theater. Elsewhere in central Illinois, Peoria's Corn Stock Winter Playhouse is presenting *Speed-the-Plow*, with **Dave Schick** among the actors.

For Players' *Oleanna*, first-time director **Cris Embree** is working with **Dave Krostal** as John and, making her Community Players debut, **Megan Brown** as Carol. **Dorothy Mundy** is producing and handling props, **Dan Virtue** is designing the lighting and sound effects, **Gary Ploense** is sound designer, **Anita Corso** is set designer and builder, **Judy Stroh** is stage manager, and **Wendi Fleming** is house manager.

Oleanna plays for three performances only: Thursday, Friday, and Saturday, November 19-21, all at 7:30 pm. On November 21, there will be a talk-back after the performance, in which audience members can discuss the play with the cast and staff. *Oleanna* presents adult themes and uses adult language.



... 2010/2011 season continued from page 3

Our March comedy will be ***The Solid Gold Cadillac***. The 1956 film version of the play pitted Judy Holiday, a small stock holder, against a giant corporation. The theme of the little person versus a corporation who pays no attention to its stockholders and how one of them wins out has a lot of relevance for today.

The final show of the season, in May, will be ***Titanic***, a soul-stirring musical with music and lyrics by Maury Yeston and a book by Peter Stone that opened on Broadway in 1997. It won five Tony Awards including the award for Best Musical. The sinking of the *Titanic* has

inspired many movies including *A Night to Remember* and *Titanic*.

Not part of the regular season, but also in the lineup will be our Summer Theater for Young People, ***Disney's Aladdin, Jr.***; a lab show, ***Art*** by Yasmina Reza; and a musical revue, ***Smokey Joe's Café: The Songs Of Leiber and Stoller***.

A call for directors, producers, and other staff people will be posted on the web in November at www.communityplayers.org as well as on the volunteer listserv.